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(Proceedings had via videoconference:)
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             THE CLERK: 21 CR 105, United States of America vs.
    Denzal Stewart.
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             THE COURT: Who is appearing on behalf of the
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    government?
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             MR. BERRY: Good morning, your Honor, Albert Berry --
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    B, as in boy, e-r-r-y -- for the United States.
             THE COURT: And who is appearing on behalf of
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    defendant?
             MR. HUNTER: Good morning, Judge, Steven Hunter on
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    behalf of Denzal Stewart.
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             THE COURT: And, Mr. Stewart, can you see and hear me
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    okay?
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             THE DEFENDANT: I can see and hear you, sir.
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             THE COURT: All right.
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             So, before we begin, Mr. Stewart, I want to make sure
    you understand that you do have the right to have this hearing
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    conducted in person. But I understand that because of the
    COVID restrictions, after speaking with your attorney, you are
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    agreeing to have this hearing done via videoconference.
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             Is that correct, sir?
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             THE DEFENDANT: Yes, because (unintelligible) the
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    current situation, once you leave, they would put us back in
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    quarantine.
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             THE COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry, Mr. Stewart, you need
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to repeat that. I couldn't understand.
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             THE DEFENDANT: Okay. I'm saying, yes, that I'll
    agree to it with respect to this current situation
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    (unintelligible) --
             THE COURT REPORTER: I'm only getting about half of
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           I'm only getting about half of that. There's an echo.
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             THE COURT: Here, let me try this: Mr. Stewart, what
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    I understand you saying is that because of the current
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    situation at the MCC, if you do appear in person, they'll put
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    you in quarantine for 14 days; and, so, it's because of that
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    that you're agreeing to have this hearing via videoconference.
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             Is that correct?
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             THE DEFENDANT: Yes. Yes.
             THE COURT: All right. Very good.
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             So, this is Mr. Stewart's motion for pretrial release
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    after the magistrate judge, Judge Weisman, declined to provide
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    pretrial release and to order that Mr. Stewart be detained.
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             I have reviewed the submissions of the parties, and
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    I'd like to go ahead and hear from the attorneys this morning.
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             So, can I hear from defense, please?
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             MR. HUNTER: Yes, Judge.
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             And, Judge, at the outset, I've got, I believe,
    phoned in a woman named Lisa Cunningham, who I inadvertently
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    referred to in my motion as Henrietta Zeigler. But she is the
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    woman who is pregnant and is my client's fiance. And if you
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want to hear from her, she's prepared to give testimony with regard to her suitability as a third-party custodian.

But if you want me to go forward now, I could do that right now.

THE COURT: Why don't you go ahead and go forward.

MR. HUNTER: Okay.

Well, Judge, as I stated in my motion, my client should be released because he's not a danger to the community and he's not a flight risk. The government, perhaps accidentally, exaggerates his criminal history. For example, they say in their reply that he has five felonies, but as I state in my motion, he has four. I go over those felonies in my motion, and as you can see, they're property crimes. They are not crimes of violence.

His background consists of possession of a stolen motor vehicle. There was one resisting arrest. But resisting arrest covers a wide range of activity. Things as simple as tugging your arm away when you're trying to be handcuffed under Illinois law can be resisting arrest. So, there's no basis to think that anything in his criminal history is a crime of violence.

In addition, the facts in this case, which the state

-- or the government tries to talk about at length, don't

support a finding of dangerousness. This is a property crime.

A van was lit on fire, which is regrettable, but no one was

hurt. No one was killed. No one came close to being hurt.

Yes, firemen had to put out the fire and there were people in the vicinity. That still doesn't make this a crime of violence, and it's not.

With respect to my client being a flight risk, again, the government in their pleadings exaggerates his situation, perhaps inadvertently. They keep saying he's on parole -- he was on parole at the time. He was not on parole at this time. And the case I cite in my motion -- excuse me -- yeah, in my motion, I cite the appellate case. And I've spoken to the appellate lawyer and the record is clear. He was on an appeal bond. During the appeal bond, my client received zero services or supervision. He wasn't given any access to his mental -- his medication for his mental health situation.

Now, I think that that contributed to this situation greatly. And I believe that the Court has the authority and the federal criminal justice system has much better resources to put in place that could ensure you that he won't miss court and that he's not going to be a danger to the public.

The electronic monitoring GPS program in the federal government is more than ample to pinpoint his location at all times. You could put him on 24-hour lockdown. As I mentioned, Ms. Cunningham is here, available to be a third-party custodian. She's got no criminal history. We've got other people, if you find Ms. Cunningham unacceptable, who

could be third-party custodians. We've got several locations lined up for people willing to accept him, if you're so inclined.

I think that if he's on pretrial release, that we can count on Pretrial Services to give him access to the mental health treatment that he needs but that he hasn't gotten.

Additionally, Judge, as I mentioned in my reply to the government's brief, there's a situation -- there's another case, the case of Jacob Fagundo, that undermines the government's whole argument that he's some great big threat because Mr. Fagundo did things that were worse than my client is alleged to have committed. He put a firecracker inside of a police vehicle. Now, he got a lesser offense, and he got probation. I understand the government wanted some small amount of jail time. But to treat two people so similarly situated so differently, I think, undermines the argument that they really perceive him to be danger.

If Jacob Fagundo got a charge of civil unrest, whereas my client is charged with arson and a five -year mandatory minimum, there's something really wrong here. And I think that what would be compounding this injustice is to hold him indefinitely in custody while we try to work our way through COVID-19 criminal court.

My client has told me within the last few days that there's a lockdown at the MCC because of another COVID

outbreak.

Now, another factual dispute that I've got with the government is, I put in my motion, that he has a serious case of asthma. Mr. Berry points to medical records that say he hasn't used an inhaler. Well, that doesn't prove anything. My client has been to the hospital for his asthma. And I believe that he's in serious risk, especially with the Delta variant outbreak even with vaccinated people, of becoming sick and possibly dying from COVID because the MCC conditions are such that you just can't social distance.

In addition, MCC conditions are such that he's on lockdown most of the time. He can't exercise. There are no programs. We are all better off if Pretrial Services can monitor him more closely than I think he is being monitored in the MCC. The MCC is just making sure he doesn't escape. Beyond that there's not a whole lot being done for him. I submit, Judge, that Pretrial Services could do much more, and that would make my client's mental health condition improve. It would ensure the safety of the public. And it would -- and it's not a danger to the community.

So, I would ask you to consider granting my request; put my client on EM and GPS; have a third-party custodian; keep him tied to a single residence. If he left for any reason, the authorities would know about it immediately and could arrest him and put him back in the MCC. But I don't

think that's going to happen. If you give him this chance, I believe that he will stay at home with his pregnant girlfriend and behave the way we would all want him to behave.

Thank you, Judge.

THE COURT: All right. Thank you.

Mr. Berry?

MR. BERRY: Thank you, your Honor.

Arson is a crime of violence. It's defined as such. Congress has found it such. And that's what it is. It's a crime of violence.

I think there's a misunderstanding between Mr. Hunter and I. I've never said that his previous convictions were crimes of violence. And that's not what the statute says.

The statute says that he's a danger to the community. And there are many crimes that are not crimes of violence that can make a person a danger to the community.

A person who possess a firearm, it's not a crime of violence, but that person is a danger to the community.

A person who breaks into people's homes where they live, residential burglary, is defined as not a crime violence. However, that makes a person a danger to the community.

A person who resists police officers and escapes electronic monitoring is a danger to the community and also a risk of flight.

So, that's where I think we disagree on that. I've never said that those were crimes of violence, and they're not.

The Judge disappeared.

(Brief pause.)

MR. BERRY: I've never said that those were crimes of violence, and they're not. But it does make him a danger to the community and a risk of flight.

The defendant was on bond. He was on release when he committed these offenses. He's had a terrible history of appearing in court. He's had a terrible history of residing -- excuse me, of actually complying with conditions of release, to the point where he was terminated unsatisfactorily and placed into IDOC custody.

Now, when we talk about the history and characteristics of this crime, the defendant -- and as I said in my motion -- him and his co-defendant used cover of a moment in history and went out and committed crimes. They told you in the video what they were going to do. Told you they were going to do downtown and commit those -- commit crimes. And that's what they did. They went downtown and they lit an unoccupied CTA van on fire.

And, yes, the defendant is seen with a lighter at the back of that car. Him and his co-defendant are seen in the front cab of that van with a flash and a spark where that van

is lit on fire. They're seen holding the doors. Defendant is throwing cardboard boxes into that. And they did pose a danger to the community. It was an eight-minute fire. And in that eight minutes, there are instances where the fire extended up. There are instances where the fire extended out towards the building. Firefighters are fighting that fire and the fire is still raging on.

So, yes, that fire, though it was to an unmarked -- excuse me, an unmanned CTA van is a danger to the community.

As to defendant's risk of flight, as I stated, defendant has not appeared in court previously. He has shown that he is not a person who can be trusted to appear.

Now, counsel talked about this other case of

Mr. Fagundo, and I will briefly touch on that. That (audio

transmission interrupted) brought by the government in each

district. And as counsel knows, there are many different

things that come into play when you charge an individual.

What's the evidence? Can you say that that's the individual

that committed the crime? There are a bunch of different

things that go into play.

By charging Mr. Fagundo with that crime, there is in no way anyone saying that there are two different people that are in the same situation but being treated differently. The evidence is different in both of those cases. The government charges what they think is appropriate. That's the job of a

prosecutor. That's what a prosecutor is to do.

The evidence in that case was what he was charged with, and that's the reason he was charged with that.

Evidence was lacking in other areas, and that's why

Mr. Fagundo was charged with what he was charged with.

So, there's no ulterior motive or underlying issues here as to the reason why those two were charged differently.

Your Honor, I just would end here and I would -- we take the defendant and his co-defendant's words. And I'm not trying to ascribe anything that the co-defendant stated to Mr. Stewart. Mr. Stewart is in that video agreeing with certain comments from his co-defendant. He says he's going to go and grab me some jewelry. He puts up a facemask; says, facemask (audio transmission interrupted). He tells you that he is going downtown to do something. And the defendant -- THE COURT REPORTER: Mr. Berry, excuse me. This is

MR. BERRY: Okay. I'll move closer --

THE COURT REPORTER: If you could slow down a little and speak closer to the microphone. Thank you.

the reporter. You're breaking up, sir. You're breaking up.

MR. BERRY: Sure. I will do that. No problem. I apologize.

Take the defendant at his word, your Honor, as to what he went down there to do. The defendant is on video setting a fire to a van. He does face a five-year mandatory

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    minimum. Nothing has changed from the time that he was
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    ordered detained by Magistrate Weisman to now. I would submit
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    that a third-party custodian, a person with a high-risk
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    pregnancy is not the individual that should be supervising the
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    defendant to make sure he abides by all the conditions of --
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    any conditions of release that a judge would give. So, I
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    would say that she is not a suitable third-party custodian.
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             However, it's the government's position that
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    Mr. Stewart should still be detained. Nothing has changed
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    since his hearing previously.
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             Thank you, your Honor.
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             THE COURT: All right. Thank you, Mr. Berry.
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             Mr. Hunter, anything? Any final words?
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             MR. HUNTER: Judge, well, I think that there are a
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    few things that Judge Weisman was led to believe that aren't
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    true. One is that he was on parole, which is just not true.
    He's not on parole. He wasn't on parole at the time.
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             With respect to the third-party custodian, we have
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    multiple candidates who we would be happy to submit to
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    Pretrial Services for evaluation of suitability. We have
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    multiple residences. If one part of the city is deemed
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    inappropriate, we could put him somewhere else.
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             With respect to the Fagundo situation, I know what
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    the guy pled guilty to. It's putting a firecracker into a
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police car. So, if he pled quilty, presumably that means that

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the government could prove it. But, I mean, it's just ridiculous that a white art school student gets that deal and my client is locked up indefinitely for essentially the same thing. It looks bad. Maybe there's an explanation for it, but it just -- I think it promotes disrespect for the system when two different people are treated so differently. And they shouldn't be treated so differently.

You know, my client -- when Mr. Berry talks about how he got probation and then he was violated -- he was 17 years old at the time and he was mentally ill. He got sentenced to boot camp at IDOC, but because of his untreated mental illness, he was denied access to the program and he had to go and serve a long sentence when he was supposed to get out in about 180 days.

He's been treated very harshly by the system from the time he was 17 until now, but it's really not been warranted. You can't point to a single person who he's harmed, who's been physically injured by him. He's not a danger to the community, and therefore I submit he should get out.

THE COURT: Mr. Hunter, what am I supposed to make of all of the violations of probation, failure to appear in court, all of the warrants that had to be issued to ensure Mr. Stewart's presence in court?

It just seems like he has a history of not complying with the requirements when he is provided an opportunity to be

on pretrial release or probation.

MR. HUNTER: Judge, I would submit that the person who committed those violations is not the person who is before you today. Most of those occurred when he was a teenager. And I detail in -- at great length in the motion all of his mental problems that he's never really received any adequate treatment for. So, to say that this mentally ill teenager didn't comply, as opposed to the person who is before you today who is older and, you know, certainly willing and hopeful to receive the proper medication and treatment, I don't think the two things are equivalent.

And I also submit, Judge, if we can get him the proper medication and treatment, then his compliance will be a hundred percent. He wasn't getting and has never had proper medication and treatment. So, the past compliance is his responsibility, I would agree; but, to a certain extent, I believe that the system contributed to his situation.

THE COURT: What about the fact -- the other factors

I have to consider, such as the weight of the evidence against
the defendant?

I reviewed the videos that the government submitted as part of its response, and the evidence seems pretty weighty with regard to this defendant and the case against him.

MR. HUNTER: Well, I would argue that you can't accept the -- you know, a interested party's representations

at face value. For example, I've seen the video and where Mr. Berry sees a flame, I see what I think is most likely sunlight glinting off of some, you know, shiny object. I don't think that -- other than pushing a cardboard box through a window, I don't think that there's conclusive proof that my client participated in an arson. There's some question in my mind if that's really him. I'm not sure how they're -- you know, exactly how they can establish beyond a reasonable doubt that that person is there, because the video seems to be from far away.

But I don't want to argue the evidence. You know, that's what the trial is for. But, you know, if we assume that they've got a strong case, that still doesn't mean he should be held in custody. Lots of people who face strong cases are released. I would submit that almost every case in federal court is a strong case for the government and if that were the litmus test, nobody would get out.

THE COURT: I was looking at the other video, too.

Just the overall activities that Mr. Stewart engaged in and including, you know, trying to basically free one of the Divvy bikes from the stands. I mean, it seems like he and Mr. Taylor were down during the protests just to create mayhem.

And I wonder about the safety of the public when, number one, the counts -- the offense that's charged is a very

serious one with a serious mandatory minimum of five years, and then taking that into account, the actions -- at least from the video, what the government attests to be actions by Mr. Stewart and Mr. Taylor on that day when other people, you know, are there peacefully protesting or walking by.

MR. HUNTER: Well, Judge, I would submit that, assuming just for the sake of argument that the people in the video are my client and his cousin, if you look at all of the videos that I've got -- and I'm assuming you have -- there are people breaking into a Foot Locker. There are people doing all sorts of things. And it's a unprecedented day. It's not every day, thank goodness, that we see an eight-minute video of a police officer choking a helpless man to death.

And the whole Black Lives Matter movement, the whole civil unrest that went on that day I don't think is likely to be repeated. And if it's not to be repeated, then I don't think that the anger that boiled over that day, not just for the people around the van, but hundreds of people in the videos, you know.

I grant you that protesting -- peacefully protesting -- would have been a better way to go about it. But all of the people down there were down there as a response to the George Floyd situation. They didn't go down there a week before. They didn't go down there a week after. This was anger boiling over at the system.

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And, so, because of that anger boiling over at the
system based on unprecedented events that occurred just one
day, I think you could be confident that it wouldn't happen
again.
         THE COURT: All right.
         Mr. Berry, anything to add? Otherwise, I'm ready to
rule.
         MR. BERRY: No, your Honor.
         THE COURT:
                    Okay.
         So, on March 17th, 2021, Magistrate Judge Weisman
ordered that Mr. Stewart be detained pending trial.
Mr. Stewart now asks this Court to review that order pursuant
to 18 U.S.C. Section 3145(b). The review of this Court is de
novo.
         Given the offense that's charged, there is no
statutory presumption of detention here. Accordingly, in
order to establish the need for detention, the government must
       One, by clear and convincing evidence that no
condition or combination of conditions will reasonably assure
the safety of the community; and/or, two, by a preponderance
of the evidence, that no condition or combination of
conditions will reasonably assure the appearance of Mr.
Stewart in court during these proceedings.
         In making this determination, the Court must consider
and weigh the factors that are set forth in 18 U.S.C. Section
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3142(g). Those factors include the nature and circumstances of the offense that's charged; the weight of the evidence against the accused; as well as the history and characteristics of the defendant, including the character, physical and mental condition, family ties, employment, financial resources, length of residence in the community, community ties, past conduct, history of drug and alcohol abuse, criminal history, and record for appearing in court.

I should also consider, whether at the time of the offense or arrest, the defendant was on probation or parole or on release pending trial, sentencing, appeal, or completion of sentence under federal, state or local law; and, finally, the nature and seriousness of danger to any person or the community if the defendant is released pending trial.

Here, after considering the totality of the record, the Court finds that the government has established by clear and convincing evidence that no condition or combination of conditions will reasonably assure the safety of the community upon Mr. Stewart's release.

Number one, Mr. Stewart is charged with a very serious crime: Arson under 18 U.S.C. 844(f)(1) and (2). And that crime has a minimum statutory term of imprisonment of five years.

And the government has provided a substantial amount of evidence to support that charge: The videos of the

defendant and defendant's cousin setting the van on fire, as well as defendants taking advantage of the public demonstrations during the Black Lives Matter protests to commit the crimes, as indicated by the various videos that were submitted by the government.

Mr. Stewart's criminal history also supports the government's position that he would be a threat to the community if released. He has been previously convicted of numerous felonies. And while Mr. Hunter argues that these were all non-violent property crimes, they all indicate a disregard for the community and, the residential burglary conviction in particular, of the willingness to put others at risk.

Furthermore, the Court cannot ignore the fact that Mr. Stewart has committed numerous violations of conditions of probation and pretrial release, necessitating the issuance of several arrest warrants. And he has been convicted of a number of crimes that he committed while he was on parole or pretrial release.

So, this, to the Court, demonstrates Mr. Stewart's disregard for the conditions and limitations placed upon him by other courts and indicates significant risk that defendant will disregard the conditions of pretrial release that would be imposed by this Court.

Now, Mr. Hunter argues that this was all in the

context of the understandable frustrations that were part of the demonstrations after the death of Mr. Floyd as part of the Black Lives Matter demonstration. But it's clear to me from the videos that Mr. Stewart did not go downtown in order to participate in those protests or as a form of protest. He went down simply to commit crimes. And that, to this Court, is really unacceptable.

Furthermore, with regard to the case of Mr. Fagundo, here, if the government proves its allegations as the videos indicate, Mr. Stewart and his cousin set fire to a van; and, that resulted in serious fire damage, as well as the need for the fire department to come and put out the fire, which was in the middle of a public street here in Chicago. So, those actions seriously put the community at risk. And I believe that the charge that the government charged in this case reflects that.

Furthermore, the Court finds that Mr. Stewart's history of ignoring parole and pretrial conditions also demonstrates that no condition or combination of conditions would be able to reasonably assure his future attendance in these proceedings and compliance in this case.

Now, I understand that Mr. Stewart has suffered from various mental conditions, but those conditions can and will be treated by the relevant personnel at the MCC during his detention.

Furthermore, with regard to Mr. Hunter's arguments that the conditions at the MCC are not safe because of COVID, the MCC has undertaken massive efforts to vaccinate its officers, employees, as well as current inmates. And the current statistics at this point indicate that the risk of contracting COVID as an inmate there are low compared to prior months and prior times. I understand from Mr. Hunter that Mr. Stewart has asthma, but, again, it is relevant that he has had no need to take medication for that asthma in the last year and appears that his symptoms are mild.

Furthermore, given Mr. Stewart's young age, I do think that the risks of him contracting COVID and being seriously ill because of contracting COVID are extremely low.

For all those reasons, the Court agrees with Magistrate Judge Weisman and finds that the government has satisfied its burden to prove by clear and convincing evidence that no condition or combination of conditions will reasonably assure the safety of the community. And the Court further finds the government has shown by a preponderance of the evidence that no condition or combination of conditions will reasonably assure Mr. Stewart's appearance in this case.

Accordingly, Mr. Stewart's motion brought by his counsel is denied.

Is there anything else that I need to address for the government today?